Hænsa-Thori's Saga

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Hænsa-Thori's Saga

Chapter 1

There was a man called Odd [Knife-edge], who was the son of Onund Breiðskeggs [Broadbeard], Ulfs son, the son of Ulf of Fitjar, the son of Skeggja [Beard], the son of Thóri Hlammanda [Thunderer]. Odd lived at Breiðabolstað in Reykjardal in Borgarfjord. He had a wife called Jórunn; she was wise and well thought of. They had four children, two very promising sons and two daughters. One son was named Thórod and the other Thorvald; the daughters were Thurið and Jófrið. This man was nicknamed Tungu-Odd [Odd from Tongue; Tungu was a placename], and he was considered unscrupulous.

There was a man called Torfi, who was the son of Valbrand, the son of Valthjóf, the son of Ørlyg from Esyuberg. Torfi was married to Thurið, Tungu-Odd's daughter, and they lived on one of the farms at Breiðabolstað.

There was a man called Arngrim, the son of Helgi, the son of Hogni, who came out to Iceland with Hromund. Arngrim lived at Norðrtungu [North Tongue], and was called Arngrim Goði. His son was called Helgi.

There was a man called Blund-Ketil, the son of Geir from Geirshlið [Geir's Slope], the son of Ketil Blund, after whom Blunsvatn [Blundwater] was named. Blund-Ketil lived in Ornólfsdal, up from where the farm-place now stands. There were many homes farther up the valley. His son was named Hersteinn. Blund-Ketil was a very rich man, and the wealthiest of the older, heathen generation. He had thirty tenant farms and was the best-liked man in the district.

There was a man called Thorkel TrefI will [Tatters], son of Rauða-Bjarni [Bjorn the Red]. He lived in Svignaskarð, out beyond the North River. One of Thorkel's brothers lived in Hvamm, in the valley of North River. Another brother was Gunnvald Thorkelsfather, who was married to Helga, the daughter of Thorgeir of Vidimyr. Thorkel TrefI will was a man both wise and popular, and he had a fortune in goods.

There was a man called Thóri, who started out penniless and was not very well liked by most people. During the summer, he would peddle goods in the surrounding countryside, selling in one place what he had purchased somewhere else, and soon accumulated much wealth from his dealings. Once, when Thóri came from the south over the heath, he had had a load of chickens along, which he sold along with his other goods, so people called him Hønsa-Thóri[Chicken-Thóri]. Thóri made so much money that he bought land at the place called Vatn [Water], up from Norðrtungu. He hadn't lived there very long before everyone in the area owed him money. But even though he had such great wealth, he was stI will unpopular; in fact, there wasn't anyone more disliked than Thóri.

Chapter 2

One day Thóri left home and rode to Norðrtungu to call on Arngrim Goði, and he offered to take Helgi, Arngrim's son, as his foster son.

I will take your son Helgi in and look after him as well as I can, said Thóri, but in return I want your friendship and support, so that I can get my rights from men.

Arngrim hesitated. It appears to me that this fostering I will bring me little honor, he said.

I will give the boy half my money rather than lose my chance of fostering him, said Thóri, and added: You shall be responsible for seeing that I get my rights from anyone I deal with.

It seems to me only proper to accept such a good offer, replied Arngrim.

So Helgi went home with Thóri, and the farm place has since been known as Helgavatn. Arngrim then gave Thóri his protection, and people immediately found that Thóri was even more difficult to deal with than before. He now got his rights from everyone, and continued to accumulate wealth.

One summer a merchant ship came into Borgarfjord. It did not anchor at the mouth of the river, but lay farther out in the harbor. The ship's captain was called Ørn, a man who was well liked and considered honest. Odd heard of the ship's arrival. Because he was headman in the district, it was customary for Odd to arrive first at the marketplace in order to set prices on goods, and everyone thought it advisable to follow his lead before they bought or sold. Now Odd went to see the merchants who were with Ørn and asked them what plans they had concerning their voyage and how soon they hoped to sell their goods. He also told them that he always set the prices on goods that were sold there.

Ørn replied, We'll deal with our goods as we see fit, whatever you say, because this cargo belongs to us and not to you. The only things you'll control here will be your own words.

I suspect that the result will be worse for you than for me, said Odd, and so be it. I hereby declare it forbidden for any man to buy goods from you or to move them away. In fact, I'll fine people who help you in any way, and I know that you won't be able to leave the harbor before the spring tides.

Speak all you want, Ørn said. We're not going to be browbeaten on that account.

Odd then rode home, and the merchants remained in the harbor unable to get away.

Chapter 3

The next day Hersteinn, Blund-Ketil's son, rode out to the headland Akranes. He stopped to see the merchants as he rode back, and he was pleased because he knew Ørn and liked him well.

Ørn told Hersteinn how unjustly Odd had treated them. I don't quite know how we should handle the situation, he said.

They talked together all that day, and at nightfall Hersteinn rode home and told his father about the merchants and about what had happened.

Blund-Ketil said, I recognize the man now from what you told me, because I was with his father when I was younger. I never met a more honorable man than his father. Now it is unfortunate that his son is in such difficulties, and his father will expect me to give him some help if he needs it. Tomorrow morning early you ride out to the harbor and invite him here with as many men as he wants. If he would rather stay somethere else, I'll transport him wherever he wishes, north or south. I'll try my best to help him out.

Hersteinn said that was a fine and noble decision, but added, Yet I think it is probable that others might give us trouble because of it.

Since our cause here is no worse than Odd’s, said Blund-Ketil, I don’t think that we have much to worry about.

The night passed. Early the next morning Blund-Ketil had horses driven in from the pasture, and when all was ready Hersteinn drove a hundred and twenty of them to the merchants and all of the horses came from Blund-Ketil’s own herd. Hersteinn went out to the merchants and told Ørn what his father had proposed.

Ørn said that he would gladly accept this offer,but that he suspected that both Hersteinn and his father would incur the displeasure of others for it. Hersteinn said that they would not let that sway them.

Ørn said, Then my crew shall be stationed in other districts, because there is risk enough without having all my men together in one place.

Hersteinn brought Ørn and all his cargo home with him, and did not stop until all the merchants had left, the ship laid up, and everything put into order. Blund-Ketil greeted Ørn well, and Ørn lived at Blund’s place well cared for. News reached Odd concerning Blund-Ketil’s actions, and people began to say that he had thus set himself against Odd.

It may look like it, said Odd, but since Blund-Ketil is a man who is not only well liked but also stubborn in matters of honor, I’ll just leave things as they are.

And so all was peaceful.

Chapter 4

That summer the hay crop was small and poor because of wet weather, and hay supplies were low. During the fall, Blund-Ketil went around to his tenants and told them that he wanted all his rents paid in hay.

He said, We have many cattle to feed, and there is not much hay to be had; I shall also decide how many animals each of my tenants must slaughter this fall, and then things will work out alright.

The summer passed and winter came, and soon there was a great shortage of feed around Hliðina [the Slope], with not much laid by, so that many men ran out of hay. Things went on this way until Yule-tide. When mid-winter came, people were in such a bad way that many were ruined. One evening, a tenant came to Blund-Ketil and said that his hay was gone, and he asked Blund-Ketil to help him out.

Blund-Ketil said, How can that be? I thought the arrangements we made last fall were sufficient, and I assumed that all would go well for you.

The tenant confessed that he had not slaughtered as many cattle as Blund-Ketil had ordered.

Blund-Ketil said, Let’s strike a bargain: I will help you out of your difficulty this time, but you must promise not to tell anyone about it, because I don’t want all the tenants coming to me for help, especially since they didn’t follow my orders.

The man went home and told his friend that Blund-Ketil was the best of men in all dealings, and that he had given him help when he needed it. The friend told his friend in turn, and so the news was soon known throughout the district. A little later when Goi month [February 19 to March 19] came, two more of his tenants came to Blund-Ketil and told him that they were out of hay.

Blund-Ketil said to them, You have done wrong in not following my orders, because the fact is, though I have a good supply of hay I also have a lot of stock to feed. So, if I help you, then I won’t have enough for my own herd, so take your choice.

The tenants argued more persistently, and told of their misery until it distressed Blund-Ketil to listen to their wailing. He had one hundred sixty horses driven to the home farm and had the forty worst ones killed. Then he gave the tenants the feed that had been intended for those forty, and they went home satisfied. The weather grew even worse as winter wore on, and conditions became hopeless for many.

Chapter 5

Now One-month [March 19 - April 19] came, and two more of Blund-Ketil’s tenants came to him. They had started the winter with adequate supplies, but even so they were out of hay now, and they asked him for help. He answered that he did not have enough hay for his own stock, and that he did not with to kI will off any more animals. Then they asked whether he know anyone who did have hay to sell. Blund-Ketil said that he did not know for certain. They pressed their case, however, saying that their animals would die if he did not help them.

Blund-Ketil said they had only themselves to blame, but added, I’ve heard that Hønsa-Thóri might have some hay to sell.

They replied, We won’t get anything from him unless you come along with us, but he’ll sell to us right away if you vouch for us in the sale.

Blund-Ketil said, I’ll go with you. It is only right that those who have extra hay should be willing to sell it.

They set out early in the morning, and there was a stiff and rather cold north wind blowing. Thóri was standing outside at the time, and when he saw the men coming towards the farmyard he went in, closing and bolting the door after him; then he went to the table and began eating breakfast. There came a knocking at the door.

The lad Helgi spoke up, Go outside, fosterfather. There are men who wish to see you.

Thóri said that he wanted to finish his meal first. The lad sprang from the table and went to the door and greeted the newcomers well. Blund-Ketil asked if Thóri were in, and Helgi said that he was.

Please ask him to come out, said Blund-Ketil.

The lad went in and told Thóri that Blund-Ketil was outside and wished to see him.

Thóri answered, Why should Blund-Ketil be poking his nose around here?If he is up to any good it is a wonder; I don’t want to have anything to do with him.

Helgi went out and said that Thóri did not wish to come out.

Alright, said Blund-Ketil, then we shall go in.

So they went into the room where Thóri was, but he remained silent.

The situation is this: said Blund-Ketil. We would like to buy hay from you.

Thóri answered, Your livestock is worth no more to me than my own.

That depends, said Blund-Ketil.

And why are you short of hay, with all your money? asked Thóri.

I don’t exactly need hay myself, said Blund-Ketil. I came in behalf of my tenants, who seem to be in need of help, and I would like to get hay for them if possible.

Thóri said, You have every right to give away your goods to others, but not mine.

Blund-Ketil replied, We are not asking for gifts; let Odd and Arngrim set the prices for you, and I will give you gifts besides.

Thóri said, I don’t have any hay to sell, and moreover I will not sell.

Blund-Ketil and his followers went out and the lad went with them. Then Blund-Ketil spoke to Helgi.

Which is correct, that your fosterfather has no hay to sell, or that he won’t sell it?

The lad answered, He certainly has hay to sell if he wishes.

Lead us to where the hay is, said Blund-Ketil.

Helgi did so. Then Blund-Ketil reckoned out how muchhay Thóri needed for his stock and concluded that even if all of the stock were stall-fed until Althing-time [around mid-summer], there would stI will be five stacks left over. Then they went back in the house.

About your hay supply, Blund-Ketil said, it appears to me that even if all your stock were fed in stall until Althing-time, there would stI will be quite a bit left over, and I would like to buy that much.

Thóri answered, But what shall I have next winter if the weather is as bad as this, or worse?

I offer you this choice: to be repaid in the summer with an equal amount of hay of the same quality, and I will bring it here to your place myself.

If you do not have enough hay now, how will you have enough in the summer?But I know that you have much more power than I have, and you could take the hay from me if you wished.

You misunderstand me. You know very well that silver is the common currency of the land, and I’ll pay you with that.

I don’t want your silver.

Then take in payment whatever goods Odd and Arngrim decide you should have.

There aren’t many workmen here, and I dislike traveling about or going to a lot bother like this.

Then I’ll have the goods brought home to you.

I don’t have enough room for them, so they would surely spoil.

I’ll get hides to tie around them so that they will be safe.

I won’t have other men tramping in my houses.

Then the goods can stay at my house over the winter, and I will safeguard them.

I know all your prattle how, said Thóri, and I won’t have any business with you.

Then things will take a graver course, said Blund-Ketil, because even though you have forbidden it, we will take the hay, paying for it with money, and taking advantage of our greater numbers.

Then Thóri became silent and was in no good mood. Blund-Ketil had the hay bound with ropes. After that, the men heaved the goods onto the horses and carried them away; but they estimated generously how much hay Thóri might need for the livestock on the farm, and they left that much.

Chapter 6

Now we shall tell what Thóri began doing. He left home with his fosterson Helgi, and they rode to Norðtungu and were very well greeted there. Arngrim asked what news they had.

Thóri answered, I haven’t heard of anything newer than the robbery.

What robbery was that?

Blund-Ketil has stolen all my hay, so that I have hardly any left to feed my cattle during the cold weather.

Is that so? asked Arngrim.

Not at all, said Helgi. Blund-Ketil conducted himself quite honestly in the affair. Then he told what had happened between the two men.

Anrgrim answered, That sounds more likely; it is better that he has the hay than that it rot at your place.

In an evil hour I offered to foster your child, said Thóri. There is no end to the oppression I have to suffer before I get help here, let alone my rights, and that is a monstrous shame.

The fostering was ill-advised from the beginning, said Arngrim, because I can see that in helping you I am helping an evil man.

Your words do not hurt me, said Thóri, but I think it is a shame that men steal from me, because this theft affects you also.

And they parted thus.

Thóri rode away and came to Breiðabolstað. Odd greeted him well and asked if there was any news.

I have heard nothing newer than the robbery, said Thóri.

What robbery was that? asked Odd.

Blund-Ketil took all my hay, said Thóri, so that now I am out of feed; so I would like to have your assistance. Furthermore, this matter concerns you directly because you are the leader of the district and it is your duty to see that justice is done when wrongs are committed. Also, you may recall that Blund-Ketil set himself up against you.

Is that right, Helgi? asked Odd.

Helgi said that Thóri had completely twisted the facts, and then he told Odd what had actually happened.

I will have nothing to do with this, said Odd. If I had been hard-pressed, I would have done the same as he did.

Thóri answered, It is truly said that It is best to know evil men only by hearsay, and the unkindest blows come from your own side. Thereupon he rode away with Helgi and they went home, and Thóri was in a bad mood.

Chapter 7

Thorvald, son of Tungu-Odd, had landed in the north-country that summer and had stayed up there through the winter. As summer approached, he traveled south to find his father, and on the way he stayed overnight at Arngrim's place on Norðrtungu, where he was well entertained. There was another man already there as a guest, whose name was Viðfari; he was a drifter who went from one corner of the land to the other. He was closely related to Thóri, and they were of similar disposition. That same evening, he took up his bed-roll and fled, not stopping until he reached Thóri's place.

Thóri greeted him with open arms, saying, I know that I shall benefit in some way from your coming.

That may be, replied Viðfari, because now Thorvald, Odd's son, has come to Norðrtungu and is a guest there.

Thóri said, I thought that something good was going to happen to me, because I was so glad when I saw you.

Night passed, and early that morning Thóri and his fosterson rode to Norðrtungu; many people had come there. Helgi was given a seat, but Thóri paced the floor. Thorvald, sitting on a dais-bench talking with Arngrim, noticed Thóri.

Who is that man pacing the floor? he asked.

That is my son's foster father, answered Arngrim.

Well, said Thorvald, Why is he not given a seat?

Arngrim said it was no matter if Thóri was not offered a seat.

We can’t have that, said Thorvald. He had Thóri summoned and he gave him a seat beside him. Then he asked Thóri concerning the most recent news.

Thóri said, It was a hard blow when Blund-Ketil robbed me.

Have you two come to terms? asked Thorvald.

Far from it, said Thóri.

Thorvald turned to Arngrim. How is it, Arngrim, that you chiefs allow such shameful things to go on?

He lies for the most part, said Arngrim, and besides, the matter is not really important.

It’s true, though, that Blund-Ketil took the hay?

Yes, he did, said Arngrim.

But every man has a right to dispose of his own property as he wishes, said Thorvald, and Thóri gains little from your friendship if he gets walked over in this way.

Thóri said, I like you very much, Thorvald, and something tells me that you will help me get my rights in this case.

I don’t have much authority or power, replied Thorvald.

I’ll give you half of my wealth if you support my case and see that I either get self-judgment or he gets outlawry, so that my enemies won’t be allowed to keep what rightfully belongs to me.

Don’t do this, Thorvald, said Arngrim, because he is not a good man to help. Besides, you would be setting yourself up against a man who is wise and mighty, and well-liked by everyone.

I see that you envy my receiving his money, said Thorvald, and you begrudge it to me.

Thóri said to Thorvald, I think you will find that I have quite a lot of wealth, and it’s well known that everywhere men owe me money.

Arngrim said, I would like to persuade you not to get involved in this case, Thorvald, but you must do as you think fit; but I’m afraid that much evil will result from this.

Thorvald answered, I won’t refuse wealth when it is offered.

Then Thóri and he shook hands on the money arrangement and on Thorvald’s assumption of Thóri’s right of prosecution in the case against Blund-Ketil. Then Arngrim spoke again.

How do you intend to go about this case? he asked.

Thorvald answered, I shall go first to see my father and ask his advice.

Thóri said, That does not suit me; I want no delay. I’ve staked a great deal in this, and I want to have the process served on Blund-Ketil as early tomorrow as possible.

Thorvald said, Apparently it is true what they say: you are not a lucky man, and you will cause evil; yet it shall be done.

Then he and Thóri agreed to meet at a certain place the next morning.

Chapter 8

Very early in the morning Thorvald rode out, accompanied by Arngrim and thirty men. They met Thóri, and he had only two with him: Helgi, Arngrim’s son, and Viðfari, Thóri’s kinsman.

Why do you have so few men? asked Thorvald.

I knew that you would have enough, replied Thóri.

Then they rode along Hliðina [the Slope]. When this company of men was seen from the different farms, everyone rushed out of their homes, thinking that the sooner they reached Blund-Ketil’s place the better. Consequently, there were many men there. Thorvald and his men rode up to the farmyard, dismounted, and walked up to the house. As soon as Blund-Ketil saw this, he went to meet them and told them to make themselves at home.

Thorvald replied, We didn’t come here to eat. I want to know how you will answer for taking Thóri’s hay.

I will say to you what I said to Thóri: set whatever price on the hay you wish, and I will give you gifts besides, and more and better ones as you are more deserving than Thóri. And I will settle with you in such a way that all men will say that you are greatly honored.

Then Thorvald fell silent, for he thought that this was a generous offer.

Thóri said, This is unacceptable, and there is no need even to think about it. I had the same offer a long time ago. I don’t consider myself helped much if this is the result. It profited me little to give you my money.

Then Thorvald said, What will you do concerning the legal side of this case, Blund-Ketil?

Nothing , but I’ll let you judge and decide according to your own will.

Thorvald replied, Then I see no other alternative than to serve summons on you.

He then summoned Blund-Ketil for thievery and named witnesses, and the summons was couched in the strongest possible terms. Blund-Ketil turned toward his home, and he met the Eastman Ørn as he was going to look after his wares.

Are you wounded? asked Ørn. You’re as red as blood.

No, said Blund-Ketil, I am not wounded, but what has happened is just as bad. Words have been used against me that I never before heard uttered. I am called thief and robber.

Ørn took his bow and fitted an arrow to the string, and he came out just as the others were mounting their horses. He shot and hit a man, who then sank down from his horse. The man was Helgi, son of Arngrim Goði. The others ran to him. Thóri thrust his way through the men, pushing them away and telling them to give room.

This concerns me most, he said. He bent down over Helgi, but the boy was already dead. Thóri asked, Are you very weak, my fosterson?He then straighted up from the corpse and said, The lad spoke to me, and twice he said, Burn, burn Blund-Ketil in!

Now it goes as I feared, said Arngrim, for evil comes from evil men. I suspected that much evil would come from you, Thóri. And I am not certain what the lad really said, whatever you may prattle, yet it does not seem unlikely that such a thing [burning of Blund-Ketil] may be done. This affair began in evil, and it may well end there.

Thóri replied, It seems to me that you ought to have something more important to do than rant and rave at me.

Arngrim and his followers then rode away past the edge of the forest where they were hidden and then dismounted. They stayed there until night. Blund-Ketil thanked his men well for their aid, and he suggested that each man ride home at his convenience.

Chapter 9

It is said that as soon as it was dark, Thorvald and his men rode to the house in Ornólfsdal. Everyone was asleep there. They dragged a pile of firewood to the house and set fire to it. Blund-Ketil and his men did not awaken until the whole house was ablaze above them. Blund-Ketil asked who it was that had lighted so hot a fire. Thóri told him who it was. Blund-Ketil asked if anything could bring about peace. Thóri said there was no choice other than to burn. The men did not leave until every person in the house had burned to death. Hersteinn, son of Blund-Ketil, had gone that evening to the home of his foster-father, who was called Thorbjørn and nicknamed the Strider. It was said that he was a long-headed man.

Hersteinn awoke in the morning and asked whether his foster father were awake.

Thorbjørn said that he was, And what do you want?

Hersteinn answered, I dreamed that my father came in here with all his clothes on fire, so that he seemed as one flame to me.

They arose and went out, and immediately saw the fire. They seized their weapens and rushed over, but all the men were gone when they got there.

Hersteinn said, Grievous things have happened here. What do you suggest we do?

Thorbjørn answered, Now I’ll make use of the offer that Tungu-Odd has so often made to me:that I should come to him if ever I should need any help.

I doubt that there is much hope in that, said Hersteinn.

In spite of what Hersteinn said, they left and came to Breiðabolstað and called Odd out. He went out and greeted them well, and asked them the latest news. They told him what had happened, and he said it was unfortunate.

Thorbjørn spoke up. You recall, Odd, that you have promised me your support. Now I ask you to give me good counsel and assist me.

Tungu-Odd said that he would do so.

They then rode to Ornólfsdal and reached there before daybreak. By then the houses were fallen and the fire almost out.

Odd rode over to the house that was not yet burned down, reached out and grabbed a birch rafter and tore it from the house. Then he rode around the houses with the burning brand counterclockwise, saying, I take here this land into my possession, because I see here no house inhabited. Hear ye all witnesses who are nearby. Then he spurred his horse and rode away.

What shall we do now? asked Hersteinn. This turned out rather badly.

Keep quiet for now if you can, said Thorbjørn, no matter what happens.

Hersteinn answered that he had spoken no more than what was called for.

There was one building unburned, inside of which were the wares of the Eastmen and much other wealth. At this point old Thorbjørn disappeared, and as Hersteinn looked toward the building he saw that the door was opened and the goods carried out, but he did not see anyone. The goods were bound into bundles. He then heard a great noise in the home-meadow, and saw that all of his father's horses were being driven home, the sheep and the cattle from the cow-shed - all of the livestock. Afterwards the bundles were heaved up, and everything went on its way, and all that was worth anything was driven away. Hersteinn followed after, and saw that it was old Thorbjørn who was driving the animals. They went their way down aloang the countryside, into Staffholts-tongue, and so out over North River.

Chapter 10

The sheepherder of Thorkel TrefI will from Svignaskarð went out that morning to his flock and he saw them going along, driving all sorts of livestock. He mentioned this to Thorkel.

I know what is happening, said Thorkel. These are men from Thverárhlið [Cross-river Slope] and friends of mine. They were hard-hit by the winter and will be driving their animals here. They are welcome. I have enough hay, and there is enough pasture for grazing.

He went out into the farmyard, welcomed them, and asked them to make themselves right at home. They could hardly dismount by themselves, he was so eager to help them.

You have welcomed us handsomely, said Thorbjørn, and much depends on your fulfilling what you have promised me.

I know why you're here, said Thorkel. You would like to leave your animals here, where there is lots of good pasture-land.

We'll accept it, said Thorbjørn. Then he took Thorkel aside near the houses and said, I have big news to tell you.

Thorkel asked what that might be.

Blund-Ketil was burned in his house last night.

Who did that shameful thing? asked Thorkel.

Then Thorbjørn told him all that had happened, saying, Hersteinn now needs some helpful advice from you.

I don’t know that I would have been so free with my offers had I known this before, said Thorkel. However, I shall give my advice as I promised. But first let us go in and eat.

They agreed to that. Thorkel TrefI will was very quiet and somewhat pensive, and when they had eaten he had their horses ready for them. Then they all took their weapons and mounted. That day Thorkel rode ahead, and before leaving he ordered that the stock in the fields should be well cared for, and that those in the stalls should be well fed. They they all rode out to Skógarstrond [Wood-beach] to Gunnarstað [Gunnars place], which lies far in on the Strond. The man living there was Gunnar Hlifsson, a big man, strong and most courageous. He was married to the sister of Thorð Gellir, and her name was Helga. Gunnar had two daughters, one called Jófrið and the other Thurið.

Thorkel and the others arrived there late in the day and dismounted up above the house. The wind was from the north and rather cold. Thorkel went to the door and knocked. A servant came to answer and he greeted the newcomer well, asking who he might be.

Thorkel said he would be none the wiser even though he should tell him, and added, Ask Gunnar to come out.

The servant said that Gunnar had gone to bed. Thorkel asked him to tell Gunnar that a man wished to see him. The servant went in and told Gunnar that a man wished to see him. Gunnar asked who the man might be. The servant said that he did not know, except that he was a big man.

Gunnar said, Go tell him that he can stay here tonight.

The servant did what Gunnar said, but Thorkel replied that he did not wish to receive invitations from servants, but only from the master himself.

The servant said, That may be so, but Gunnar is not in the habit of getting up during the night. Take your choice: either go away or come inside and stay for the night.

Now take <u>your</u> choice, said Thorkel. Either do what I asked you and do it right or get my sword-hilt across your nose!

The servant leaped back inside and slammed the door. Gunnar asked why he was carrying on so frantically. The servant said that he did not want to have anything more to do with the newcomer because he was too harsh-spoken.

Then Gunnar got up and went out into the yard. He was in night-clothes, with a cape over his shoulders, black shoes on his feet, and a sword in his hand. He greeted Thorkel well and invited him inside, but Thorkel said that there were more with him. Gunnar went out into the home-field, while Thorkel grasped the door-ring and closed the door. Then they all went around to the back of the house, where Gunnar welcomed them.

Thorkel then said, Let’s sit down, because we have many things to talk over with you, Gunnar.

They did so, sitting down on both sides of him so closely that they sat on the cloak that Gunnar had over himself.

Thorkel said, It so happens, Gunnar, that I have with me a man called Hersteinn, the son of Blund-Ketil. I'll tell you straight out why we're here. Hersteinn wishes to ask for the hand of your daughter Thurið. The reason I have come with him is that I did not want you to turn the man away, for I think this is a most fortunate match. It also matters greatly to me that this suit and my support not be scorned or answered hesitantly.

Gunnar replied, I'm not the only one to decide in this matter; I also have to consult the girl's mother, and my daughter herself, and especially Thorð Gellir, my daughter's kinsman. Yet we've heard nothing but good concerning this man and his father as well; and that is a matter worth considering.

Then Thorkel said, You must realize that we don't wish to be kept waiting a long time for the woman. We also think that this marriage is no less to your honor than ours; and it seems strange that such a wise man as you should have to think twice about such a good offer. Furthermore, we did't make this trip here intending that nothing come of it. Hersteinn, I will give you whatever help you need in furthering your suit, if he can't see what is to his own honor.

Gunnar answered, I can't understand why you are so hasty and almost threatening in this matter, because it seems like a very even match to me. There isn't anything you wouldn't do, I expect, so I believe that the best course is to accept the proposal and shake hands on it.

Then he did so, and Hersteinn named his witnesses and had the woman betrothed to him. After that they stood up and went inside, where they were treated very hospitably. Gunnar asked that news they had. Thorkel said that they had heard nothing newer than the burning of Blund-Ketil. Gunnar asked who had done it. Thorkel said that Thorvald, Odd's son, and Arngrim Goði were the instigators. Gunnar answered in few words, blaming little, yet not praising.

Chapter 11

Gunnar was up early the next morning. He went to Thorkel and his men and told them to dress. They did so, and then ate. Meanwhile, their horses were prepared. They mounted, and Gunnar rode ahead in along the fjord, which was quite ice-bound. They did not stop until they reached Hvamm, where Thorð Gellir [Bellower] lived. He welcomed them well and asked the news. They told him only what they saw fit.

Gunnar took Thorð to one side and told him that he had Herstein, Glund-Ketil's son, and Thorkel TrefI will with him, and added, They are here because Hersteinn wants to become my son-in-law by marrying my daughter Thurið. How advisable do you think that is?The fellow is well-liked and accomplished; he does not lack wealth, because his father has said that he would give up his place and let Hersteinn take it over.

I really like Blund-Ketil, said Thorð, and for this reason: once, when I opposed Tungu-Odd at the Althing in a matter of a servant's weregild, which it was decided he should pay me, I had left home with two other men in the foulest sort of weather, and we came to Blund-Ketil's during the night. We were very well received there and we stayed a week. He exchanged horses with us and gave me some good stallions. That's how I was treated by him, but stI will it seems to me that it would not be a mistake to turn down this proposal.

Gunnar said, You must consider that she will not be betrothed to any other man, though she be asked, because Hersteinn seems to me a valiant man, and his proposal is good. Moreover, there may be much danger in what may happen if this man is turned down.

Thereupon Gunnar went to find his daughter, for she was being fostered by Thorð, and he asked her what she thought of the proposal. She answered that she was not longing for a husband so much that she did not think equally well of staying at home.

Here with my kinsman Thorð I am well cared for, she added. But I shall do as you two wish, in this and other things.

Then Gunnar went to talk again with Thorð and said that the match seemed most promising to him.

If that’s what you want, said Thorð, why don’t you give your daughter to him yourself?

I would only do it if it is your wish as well as mine.

Thorð said that the decision should be reached by the two of them.

Gunnar said, Thorð, I want you to betroth the woman to Hersteinn.

You yourself should betroth your daughter.

I prefer that you betroth her, said Gunnar, because it is more honor.

So Thorð gave in, and the betrothal took place.

Then Gunnar said, I also ask you to let the wedding take place here at Hvamm, for then it will be done with the most honor.

Thorð told him to do whatever he wished, if he thought it better that way.

Let us say, then, that the wedding will be a week from today, said Gunnar.

Thereupon they mounted their horses and rode away. Thorð went with them on the trail and asked once more if there was any news to tell.

Gunnar answered, We’ve heard of nothing newer than the burning of Blund-Ketil.

Thorð asked how that had happened, and Gunnar told him the whole story of the burning: who was responsible and who had done it.

Thorð said, This match wouldn’t have been decided upon so quickly had I known this. You probably think that you have completely outwitted and tricked me, but it seems quite uncertain to me that you can manage this affair by yourselves.

Gunnar replied, We feel that you are a good man to rely on for help, and now you are bound to aid your son-in-law, as well as we are bound to aid you, for many heard you betroth the woman, and the whole match was done with your consent. Furthermore, it’s good to have a final test of strength between you leaders, because you’ve been snapping at each other like starved wolves for some time.

Chapter 12

They then parted company, and Thorð was as angry as he could be, for he thought that they had made a fool of him. The others rode first to Gunnar’s place, thinking they had played the game well to have brought Thorð into the case with them, and they were very happy. They did not ride south this time, but invited men to the wedding and then met at Hvamm at the designated time. Thorð had many wedding guests there, and he seated the people in the evening. He himself sat in the place of honor on the bench along one wall, together with his son-in-law Gunnar and his men. Thorkel TrefI will and the bridegroom sat on the opposite bench with their guests. On the high seat between the benches were the bride and the women.

When the tables were set and all were in their seats, then Hersteinn the bridegroom sprang over the table and went to a place where a stone stood. He put one foot on the stone and announced, I swear this oath: that before the Althing is ended this summer I shall have Arngrim Goði pronounced full outlaw or else have self-judgment in the case. Then he returned to his seat.

Gunnar leaped forward then and announced, I swear this oath: that before the Althing is ended this summer, I shall have Thorvald Oddsson sentenced to outlawry or else have self-judgment.

He went back to the table and said to Thorð, Why are you sitting there and not making a vow?We know that you feel the same as we do.

Thorð replied, I’m not saying anything right now about my feelings.

If you want us to speak for you, we can, said Gunnar, because we know that you intend to have Tungu-Odd for yourself.

Say what you want, replied Thorð, but I’ll decide myself what I say. Just finish well what you have sworn.

Besides this, nothing noteworthy happened at the feast. It proceeded in noble fashion, and when it ended each went his way.

And the winter drew to a close.

When spring came, Thorð and Gunnar gathered men and traveled south to Borgarfjorð; they came to Norðrtungu and summoned both Arngrim and Hønsa-Thóri to the Althing at Thingnes. Hersteinn then separated from the group with thirty men and went to the place where, he said, Thorvald Oddsson had last spent the night, for Thorvald had then left his winter quarters. Then there was unrest throughout the district, with much talk and mustering of men on both sides.

Chapter 13

It so happened that Hønsa-Thóri left the district with eleven men as soon as he heard who had come into the case, and nothing was heard of him. Odd then gathered men from the valleys, from both Reykjardals and from Skorradal, and from all the communities south of Hvitá [White River], and in addition he got many men from other communities.

Arngrim Goði recruited men from Thverárhlið and from parts of Norðrárdal [North River Valley]. Thorkel gathered men from Myrar [swamp country] and Staffholtstungu; he also had some men from Norðrárdal with him, because his brother Helgi lived at Hvamm and had come along in the company.

Thorð Gellir gathered men from the west, and did not have many with him.

Now all those who were in the case met, and they had two hundred forty in all; they then rode on the west bank of North River, and over the river at Eyjavaði [Eyja-ford], above Staffholt, and were going to cross Hvitá at Thrælastraumr [Thrall-stream]. There they saw a great body of men on the south bank of the river: Tungu-Odd and nearly four hundred eighty men. Both parties quickened their pace, trying to reach the fording-place first. They met at the river. Odd and his men leaped from their mounts and defended the ford, so that they blocked the advance of Thorð and his men, who were eager to get to the Althing. The two groups began to fight, and soon men were injured. Four of Thord's men fell, including Thórólf Refr [Fox], brother of Alf ór Dolum [Alf from the Dale], a worthy man. Thorð and his men withdrew then. One man from Odd's company was killed and three were badly wounded.

Thorð then turned the case over to the Althing. Afterwards they rode home to the west, and it seemed to men that the prestige of the West-men had sufferred a blow. Afterwards Odd rode to the Althing and sent his servants home with the horses. When they came home, Jórunn, Odd's wife, asked what news there was. They said that they had nothing to say except that a man had come from the west out of Breiðafjord who could answer Tungu-Odd, and that the sound of his voice was like that of a bellowing bull. She said that being opposed was no news, because after what had happened that was to be expected.

There was a battle, too, they said, and five men fell in all, and many were wounded. At first, however, they had not mentioned that.

Then the Althing progressed, and nothing new happened. When Gunnar and his son-in-law came home, they exchanged dwellings; Gunnar went to Ornólfsdal and Hersteinn took Gunnarstað. Gunnar then had all the wood that Ørn the Eastman had owned brought to him from the west and moved to Ornólfsdal. Then he began building up the burned-down place, for Gunnar was the handiest of men. He was an able man in all respects, a very skillful fighter and a valiant man in every way.

Chapter 14

Now the time came when men rode to the Althing; there was a great mustering of men in the various districts, and each side had a great troop of men. When Thorð Gellir came to Gunnarstað, Herrstein lay sick, so that he was unable to go to the Thing. Hersteinn therefore handed over his case to others. Thirty men stayed behind with him, while Thorð rode to the Thing. Thorð gathered his friends and his kinsmen and came early to the Thing, which was then held at ármannsfell [fell=hill]. As the groups came, Thord's company swelled to great size.

When Odd and his men were seen approaching, Thorð rode against them , not wanting them to come under the legal sanctuary of the Thing-area. Odd rode with three hundred sixty men. Thorð sought to prevent their entrance onto the hallowed ground of the Thing, and a battle began immediately. Soon there were men killed and many wounded. Six of Odd's men fell, because Thorð had the advantage of numbers. Well-wishing men perceived that if the whole Thing fell to fighting, troubles would arise that would be long in corfrecting, so they went between the groups and separated them. They brought about a reconciliation. Odd, overpowered, had to give way, both because he had a weaker case and because his forces were small. It was then declared that Odd was to pitch camp outside the Thing area, but was nevertheless permitted to go to the court and on necessary errands. He and his men were to behave peacefully and show no belligerance. Then the case was considered and attempts were made to bring about a settlement, and it went badly for Odd, mostly because such an overwhelming force was opposing him.

Chapter 15

As for Hersteinn, his sickness left him shortly after the man had left for the Thing, and he went to Ornólfsdal. Early one morning he was in the smithy, because he was handy at working with iron, and a tenant farmer came whose name was Ornólf.

My cow is sick, he said, and I would like you to come and take a look at her. We’re glad that you have returned, and that we now have someone who makes up for the loss of your father, who was such a great help to us.

I don’t care about your cow, said Hersteinn, and even if I did I couldn’t tell what was wrong with her.

What a great difference between you and your father! said the tenant. He gave me this cow and you won’t even look at it.

I will give you another cow if this one dies.

I would rather that you see this one first.

With that, Hersteinn sprang up and became angry. He and the farmer went out and followed the path to the woods. There was a winding path up the hillside, wooded on both sides, and as Hersteinn went along the cliffpath he halted, for he had better eyesight than anyone.

A shield stuck out of the woods over there, he said.

The farmer said nothing.

Have you betrayed me, you mongrel? demanded Hersteinn. Now if you’ve sworn yourself to silence, lie down in the path and don’t say a word. If you don’t do as I say, I will you.

The farmer lay down. Herstein, however, turned back toward home and summoned his men. They took their weapons and went straight into the woods and came to where Ornólf was lying in the path. They told him to go with them to the place where the meeting was agreed upon. They went until they reached a clearing.

Then Hersteinn said to Ornólf, I won’t force you to speak, but do now as you were told.

Ornólf sprang onto a hillock and whistled loudly. Twelve men then rushed forward, with Hønsa-Thóri in the lead.

Hersteinn and his men seized and killed all of them. As for Hersteinn, he smote off Thóri’s head and took it with him. Then they rode south to the Thing and divulged this news.

Because of this deed Hersteinn received much glory and a great reputation, which was to be expected. The cases were then considered, and the end result was that Arngrim Goði was made a full outlaw along with all the rest who had taken part in the burning, with the exception of Thorvald Oddsson, who was sentenced to three years banishment from the country, after which he could return. Money was given to him and to the other men to meet their travel expenses. Thorvald left Iceland that summer; he sailed down to Scotland, where he was captured and enslaved.

After this Thing ended, people thought that Thorð had handled his case capably and well. Arngrim Goði also left that summer, and it is not said how much his fine was. This was the end of the case and the men rode home from the Thing, and those who were sentenced to outlawry sailed away, as has been said.

Chapter 16

Gunnar Hlifsson lived at Ornólfsdal, and he built up the place well. He was with his herd at the summer pasture, and there were always few men at the farmhouse. His daughter Jófrið had a tent for herself outside, because she thought that was more fun. One day it so happened that Thórod, the son of Tungu-Odd, rode into Thverárhlið. On his way he came into Ornólfsdal and went into the tent to see Jófrið. She greeted him well. He sat down near her and they began to chat.

Just then a lad came from the pasture and asked Jófrið to help him take the packs off the horses. Thórod went over and took the packs off; then the lad went away and returned to the summer pasture. Gunnar asked him how he could have finished so quickly. The lad did not answer.

Gunnar asked, Did you see anything I should know about?

Not at all. he said.

No, said Gunnar, I can tell by your face that you must have something to tell me. If so, speak up. Maybe some man has come to the farm?

I didn’t see anyone come, the boy said.

Tell me what happened, Gunnar said, and he grabbed a large switch and was going to thrash the boy, but he got no more out of him than before.

Then Gunnar got his horse, leaped astride, and rode swiftly away along the hillside to the winter house. Jófrið saw her father coming and told Thórod, asking him to ride away.

I don’t want anything bad to happen because of me, she said.

Thórod said that he would leave at once. Gunnar came up quickly; he leaped off his horse and went straight into the tent. Thórod greeted him well. Gunnar returned the greeting, then asked why Thórod had come there.

Thórod said that he just happened to be passing by, and added, I do not wish to do anything to antagonize you, but I would like to know what you would say if I asked for the hand of your daughter Jófrið.

Gunnar said, I will not give my daughter in marriage after such goings-on. Anyway, for a while now we have been at odds with each other.

Then Thórod rode home.

Chapter 17

One day Odd said it would not be such a bad thing for them to have some of the produce of the land at Ornólfsdal, where other men have wrongfully set themselves up on my property.

The women agreed, and said, The cows are getting practically dry, and there I will be much better milking if we do so.

Then we'll drive our herd there, said Odd, because the pasture's good.

I'll lead the herd, said Thórod, so people will be less likely to try to stop us from grazing.

Odd said that was alright with him, and they left with the cattle. After they had come a long way, Thórod suggested that they drive the cattle to a certain place where there was the worst hay and the rockiest ground. The night passed, and in the morning they drove the cattle home. After the women finished milking, they said that that was the worst milking they had ever had, so the thing was not tried any more. Then time passed quietly for a while.

It happened that early one morning Odd came to talk with his son Thórod. Go around the district, he said, and assemble a force of men. I want to drive those others from our property. Torfi will go up to Halsá and tell them about the meeting; we'll all meet at Steinsvað [Stoneford]

They did so, and gathered a band of men. Thórod recruited ninety men and then rode to the ford. Thórod and his men came to the ford first; he asked the others to ride on ahead so that he could wait for his father.

As the men approached the fence at Ornólfsdal, Gunnar was about to load a cart. Then the lad who was with Gunnar rode up.

Men are coming to the place, he said, and there are many of them.

Yes, said Gunnar, That's so. He went into the house and took his bow, for he was an excellent archer, and often compared with Gunnar of Hliðarend. His house was well-built; there was a window in the outer door that was so large that a man could put his head through. Gunnar stood at this door with his bow.

Then Thórod came to the door with a few men [He had evidently gone through the woods in order to be able to parlay with Gunnar alone] and asked whether Gunnar wanted to offer any settlement.

Gunnar answered, I don't know that I owe any damages, but I do expect that my feathered maid-servants [his arrows] will put some of your followers to sleep [i. e. kI will them] before you get me in your power and before I bite the grass.

Thórod answered, I admit that you are foremost of men now living, but a force might come against you that is so strong that even you won't be able to resist it, because my father even now is riding here with a great band and intends to kI will you.

That is fine, but if I go down, I'll get my man first. Anyway, I'm sure that your father won't live up to any agreements.

The fact is, said Thórod, we are willing to come to terms; merely stretch forth your hand in good I will and give me your daughter Jófrið in marriage.

Gunnar answered, You are not going to force my daughter from me. On the other hand, this offer would seem fair enough as far as you are concerned, because you are a man of honor.

Worthy men would not think that I had forced your daughter from you, said Thórod, and I would be very grateful to you if you would accept this proposal under the appropriate conditions.

Finally, after getting the advice of friends and considering the fact that Thórod had conducted his suit justly and well, Gunnar stretched forth his hand and his matter was settled.

At that moment Odd came into the yard, and Thórod went immediately to meet his father and asked him what he intended to do. Odd said that he was going to burn the house and the men as well.

Thórod said, This case has taken on a new light, and I am now reconciled with Gunnar. And he told all that had happened.

For shame! said Odd. Would it have been any worse to have had the woman after we killed Gunnar, our greatest enemy?We made a mistake in giving you any authority in the matter.

Thórod answered, You'll have to fight me first, then, if there is no other way.

But then other men intervened and bought about a reconciliation. The outcome of the matter was that Jófrið was given to Thórod, and Odd disliked that greatly. Thereupon everyone went home. After that the wedding took place, and Thórod enjoyed his situation greatly. When winter ended, Thórod left the country, because he had heard that his brother Thorvald had been enslaved and he wanted to purchase his freedom. He went to Norway, but neither he nor his brother ever came back to Iceland. Odd began to age greatly, and when he heard that neither of his sons would come back, he became very sick. As the sickness began to press upon him, he told his friends that they should move him up to Skáneyjarfjell when he died because from there, he said, he would be able to see out over the entire Tungu, and it was done.

Jófrið, Gunnar's daughter, was afterward given in marriage to Thorstein Egilsson at Borg and was a great woman.

And there ends the saga of Hønsa-Thóri.